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Economic Planning, Zaire

LC/NAIROB

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

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Introduction

Development based on popular participation implies that the political and administrative authorities together with the experts and agents for change are constantly listening to the rural poor. It is a very difficult and delicate undertaking to involve the people in the national recovery and development process and not everybody joins in as expected.

Albert MEISTER notes that in recent years, the importance of popular participation in development programmes does not seem to be questioned even when many small investments requiring little capital but much labour, intensive mass mobilization campaigns or the sending of delegates to participate in the work of development programme preparation and monitoring are involved. In every case, the success of development projects depends largely on the active and intensive participation of local people. If popular participation in development is considered carefully, two schools of thought can be identified: one refers to the techniques of carrying the masses along and to the participation machinery of parliamentary democracy which is concerned with how the people are to be involved while the other considers any form of participation, regardless of the specific context in which it occurs, to be good. However, all the types of groups or types of participation do reflect concrete living conditions and ways of organizing the environment (Albert MEISTER, 1969,pp. VII-IX). Indeed, within the context of development, participation is intimately related to the conditions for making deeper structural changes and empowering the people to transform the environment into their own image.

Obviously, there is no longer any doubt about the exact meaning of popular participation in development. And yet, if the question of knowing by whom and how popular participation is to be achieved is meticulously considered, a better approach might be found to guarantee its effectiveness in the development of a continent in general and of a country in particular.

This paper begins with a brief description of a few general ideas on the concept of popular participation and goes on to analyse the experiences of Zaire in the matter of people's participation in development with examples drawn from development activities conducted in the Lower-Zaire, Bandundu and Kivu provinces by major actors such as the State, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign donors.

2. General considerations on popular participation in development

2.1. The concept of popular participation

The concept of participation may be defined as the way in which each individual relates to others, a form of socializing as well as types of groupings. The relationships in this case have to do with the normal idea of social participation, that is to say, the free association of two or more persons in a joint activity in which they intend to secure not personal and immediate benefits alone (Georges GURVITCH, 1950, ch.3 and 5). Obviously, if the members of the association do not participate actively in the life of the group, it will soon die. The participation of all members therefore becomes the condition for the survival and development of the association and of its activities.

Popular participation may be designed as a direct commitment of the people to decision making and the implementation of programmes which concern them. It should not be considered as a way of mobilizing cheap labour or as a machinery for solving problems in part at the local level. Participation does not come easily and this is why it is

sometimes considered to be a scourge. Nevertheless, it can be facilitated by securing a constant flow of clear and comprehensible information to the people involved in the planning and implementation of self-help projects.

To be effective, participation requires a free flow of information among the parties concerned and should be based on mutual understanding and confidence (Adult Education and Development, No.35, September 1985, pp. 43-49 of the French version).

Indeed, the people are often called to participate in the implementation of community projects. Their co-operation is requested to further the human investment programme efforts decided on by the village general assembly in which all the people participate. The Kivu programme in Zaire can be cited as a case in point. During the missions conducted to follow up projects financed by counterpart funds of EEC origin, the project team had occasion to see a people mobilized on their own to transport the stones and sand that would be used to build a health centre and other facilities.

Such participation in the implementation of community projects requires strict organization and regulations but should not, in fact, stop at that level. The people must participate in the preparation of development projects, in the making of decisions and the evaluation of results achieved. It is up to the committee of the association or of the group to institute the machinery for such participation.

If they are to participate in the preparation of the project, the people must assume the responsibility for identifying, preparing and implementing the project. They must be consulted at home, meetings must be held to elicit their opinion and what they have to say, among other things, should be taken into account. Participation in decision-making means that a democratic or consultative machinery should be put in place. There should be a way of voting which allows everyone an equal chance to have their say in the final decision or a machinery that helps to achieve a consensus. Finally, participation in project evaluation means that everyone is made responsible and brought to expressing a judgement on the value of an activity in which they themselves have participated or to appreciate the value of results achieved in the field (Fernand VICENT, 1987, pp. 10-12).

Popular participation in national development is a very big issue. It is necessary, if not indispensable, for project success and essentially entails:

(a) The total commitment of the people;

(b) Consideration of the environment study and of the needs of the people concerned;

(c) A degree of decentralization in decision-making; and

(d) Integration of all community development activities.

In addition to these, a number of things should be done before the effective participation of the people in development can be secured. These have to do with the existence of:

(a) Genuine national unity (strength in unity);

(b) Comprehensive information;

(c) Frank dialogue from the top to the grassroots and vice versa as well as horizontally;

(d) Permanent structures for organization, evaluation or control;

(e) Increased participation of women and youth; and

(f) A change of attitude on the part of rulers, the elite and local people: participation makes for the transformation of the traditional mind-set into a constructive and development outlook (Zaire-Afrique, No. 122, 1978, pp.79-90).

The recommended approach to guaranteeing the effective participation of people in development follows a process termed responsibilization. This begins with a campaign for motivating and educating the people through awareness campaign to assume their responsibilities gradually. According to Fernand VICENT, the process follows the motto of approaching the farmer through who he is, what he experiences, what he knows, what he does and what he wants. From such an awareness is generated the desire to make an effort to emerge from the situation and difficulties prevailing. From that moment, the individual or the group will invent a solution and endeavour to organize the project which will enable them to achieve their goal. The group will organize itself to find the necessary resources, counting first of all on local funding, collective and individual efforts of members or appeal for external assistance as a third resort if that should be necessary. The group will secure adequate training in order to make up for its limitations in technical expertise. It will, in this way, develop itself in order to assume responsibility for its destiny and that of the village and make its own operating rules which will enable it to manage the relationships and conflicts that may arise (Fernand VICENT, op.cit., p. 14).

2.2. The role of popular participation in development

This assumes that men and women know that the development of their country, and of their community in particular, depends basically on their initiatives and efforts. Daily, they undertake projects or activities which give birth to associations and groups of which they are solely responsible. The three-fold role of popular participation in development can be identified first through the motivation:

(a) To increase productivity in the primary sector;

(b) To improve communications, housing and the quality of life; and

(c) To create jobs in the primary and secondary development sectors of the country or the community (Albert MEISTER, op.cit., p. XII).

Those development activities for which villages assume the initiative are often an attempt to address the essential needs of the village and for which the public services cannot provide. In villages and provinces, bridges and wells have been built in places, public gardens and fields developed, simple technologies evolved and such collective facilities as maternity homes, primary health care and educational centres established. To a large extent, all these are achieved when people become aware and resolve to make the effort to use their own resources in order to ensure their survival since development

is, first and foremost, the effort of a group which has decided to assume the responsibility for its future (Claude BOBILLER, p.25).

Having analysed the concept of popular participation, a practical analysis of some national experiences will be conducted.

2.3. Popular participation at a local level

An attempt will be made to see how popular participation at the local level can be increased. Fernand VICENT identifies nine stages in the mobilization of a local group. Such mobilization is never done from the outside. What may be provided are the services that the group will need so that the mobilization becomes a matter for the group itself to see what it can do to transform its life. The stages are:

(a) The desire for change felt first by an individual who perceives the situation in which the group is living and assesses the efforts being made by it to find solutions;

(b) The capacity to impress upon other members of the group his concern and desire for change;

(c) Collective awareness of the situation in which the group finds itself and of the need to do something to change that situation;

(d) Moving from that awareness to action (often on the part of a few individuals, especially young people who take the initiative to do something);

(e) Coping with initial difficulties of a technical (crops unsuited to the terrain), political (the authorities, elected officials and elders not liking the fact that the group is getting beyond their control) and financial (lack of sufficient funds to finance indispensable investment schemes) nature;

(f) The group requesting for autonomy after having surmounted the aforementioned difficulties and wanting to assume control over its own affairs in apposition to all those who dominated it in the past;

(g) The group requesting to share power by electing its own representatives to local farmers' and other organizations;

(h) The group seeking to appropriate technology, expertise, money and power and to change the attitudes of people opposed to participatory development; and

(i) The group uniting with other groups following the same approach. This is done gradually with a view to bringing to bear what ex-President Julius Nyerere once termed effective pressure at national level as the sole means of power-sharing directed against elite pressure groups (see statement made to the FAO Conference held in Rome on 13 July 1979).

One major obstacle to the domestic mobilization of a local group and therefore to effective participation of the people in development is the political dimension that is opened for the future of the group and the country, especially in the third world where this cannot be done within a strategy for pursuing a policy framework defined by national elites because the basis for such action is the quest for genuine change.

Finally, a close analysis of popular participation in national development projects in general and in Zaire in particular with specific reference to identifying who does what, when, how and why brings us to the following four approaches. In the first approach, the project idea, the decision to implement it and the implementing steps are formulated by all the villagers. In the second approach, the project idea comes from outside but the decision to implement it and the implementary steps are exclusively to be formulated by the villagers. In the third approach, the project idea and the decision to implement it come from outside the village but the local people assume the responsibility for carrying it out and supervising the activities. The fourth approach has the project idea, the decision to implement it and the implementatary steps all being formulated from outside.

3. The practice of popular participation in Zaire's development

In this last chapter, a summary will be made of Zaire's experience of popular participation in development citing projects implemented in the Lower Zaire, Bandundu and Kivu provinces with the technical and financial assistance of the Government, NGOs and foreign aid donors.

3.1. Summary presentation of the Republic of Zaire

Zaire is located in Central Africa. It was a former Belgian colony which achieved independence on 30 June 1960. The country has a surface area of 2.345.000 Km2 and a population estimated at 35.2 million which gives an average density of 15 persons/Km2 kilometers. The population as a whole is growing at the rate of 3.1 per cent per year and the urban population accounts for about 45 per cent. The rural people live in village clusters or scattered hamlets. The child mortality rate is 107 per 1000 and life expectancy at birth is 49 years for men and 53 years for women. The number of school-going children, pupils and students a year in 1988, was 4.5 million when Zaire had 79.244 hospital beds and one doctor for every 14,800 inhabitants.

Economically, Zaire produces copper, diamonds, cobalt and coffee while importing machinery and equipment, petroleum and food products. The per capita gross national product (GNP) was about $US 150, in 1988. The economy is outward-looking and overly dependent on the outside world.

Zaire has all the shades of tropical climate for growing all tropical crops. It has dry and rainy season.

3.2. The practice of popular participation in Zaire's development

3.2.1. Experiences in the lower Zaire and Bandundu provinces

This section will analyse the projects implemented in Western Zaire in the village of Mwala (Lower Zaire) and in the villages of Misimbi and Kikamba (Bandundu) using the technical and financial assistance and a supervisory team of the State. The approach used by the members of the team consisted first of:

(a) Listening to the villagers describe their local development problems;

(b) Keeping to the priorities set by the people;

(c) Preparing alternative proposals for each of the priorities within the limit of the funds invested in the project. Those proposals were designed to involve the farmers in the implementation:

(d) Selecting technologies suited to the environment so that other peasant groups could replicate them without outside intervention. Indeed this meant that the environment was known in depth in order to: (i) ensure that community time and resources were used to best advantage: (ii) avoid as much as possible conflicts in the relationship between experts and farmers: and (iii) secure the technical resources which would facilitate decision-making by the community concerned.

Through this comprehensive approach and the constant search of the project team to integrate themselves into the environment, the people were able to:

(a) Understand the importance of complementarity among various development aspects such as agricultural production, health and sanitation, infrastructural facilities and so on:

(b) Identify the internal blocks and underlying contradictions (within the village structures) and the external blocks (within the project structures themselves and in their relationships with the outside world).

3.2.1.1. Experience in the Lower-Zaire province

The national project team was made up of: (a) the Groupe d'économie rurale (GER) representing the Ministry of Rural Development initially responsible for providing permanent extension assistance to farmers: (b) the Bureau d'études d'aménagement et d'urbanisme (BEAU) representing the Ministry of Public Works and Physical Planning which was responsible for co-ordinating the project surveys and activities: and (c) the Jeunesse du mouvement populaire de la révolution Parti-Etat (JMPR) which was specially responsible for leadership training.

In this case, the activities were structured to a time-frame which conformed to the farming season. Three priorities identified and approved by the farmers and having to do with crafts, health and agricultural activities were set. With regard to craft, the objective was to recreate a craft industry that matched the level of the peasantry in 1985 because the craft industry which existed before disappeared when there was no young craftsmen available to carry on. The idea was also to enable young people to see the importance and prospects offered by the sector and to help reduce the exodus of young rural people towards the towns by creating economic activities in the rural areas. Over a six-month period, young people selected by the village development committee were trained by the project team. In accordance with the principle of complementarity, the training provided was in joinery, fitting and blacksmithing. The training was provided in the workshops of GER at Mbanza-Ngungu which had the infrastructure for practical work. It was not possible to plan on providing the training through vocational institutions because that would have taken as long as two years at the least. Also, the cost of the training would have been high and the young applicants had had little schooling. The project paid for the training fellowships of these young people, purchased additional tools that were subsequently returned to GER and raw materials for the practical work. The training programme was physically organized by GMPR, a member of the project team which also paid the fees of instructors and other staff. Finally, the village provided genuine possibilities for work in the furniture making, joinery,

carpentry, the manufacture of agricultural implements and general hardware. The constraint for the young trainees was the lack of tools and raw materials to begin their work in the village. Along with the training of these young people, three craftsmen among the farmers were selected for a four-month period for advanced training at the Centre de développement communautaire (CEDECO) which is a national NGO that manufactured the local implements requested.

The training had two objectives, namely:

(a) To teach the craftsmen to make reliable agricultural implement from local materials, to maintain and to improve on them; and

(b) To enable them to facilitate the introduction of such implements to the community. The project paid for these training programmes which were once again organized by IPPR. During the training period, the craftsmen (joiner, blacksmith and fitter) made some models of appropriate technology implements such as the pedal-operated cassava mill, the pedal-operated winnower and the groundnut decorticator. The project provided for the building of a temporary [illegible] workshop in the village and the construction, later, of a permanent workshop because many orders were received for chairs, tables, armchairs, and especially coffins which required travelling about 70 km to purchase.

To build the workshop, the project team worked out the construction programme with the village committee. The initial community work was done in the Saiongo community self-help style organized and led by CMPR. It consisted of clearing a site for the women to prepare and manufacture bricks. In three weeks, 6,000 bricks had been made.

The work was held up by a delay in the disbursement of funds from the French co-operation agency to BEAU. The lessons learned from this delay for the following year was that:

(a) The dynamism of the village committee and of community mobilization diminished;

(b) The community lost confidence in the project team which was no longer abiding by the contract on which it had insisted so much.

When work was resumed after a series of meetings to consider continuing the work on the workshop, the attitude of the village committee had changed. Project activities began to be implemented with less of the villagers participating and the women cleared the site for the workshop without the genuine enthusiasm they had had in the beginning;

(c) Difficulties arose in the relations between the craftsmen and the village committee which cashed in on the sale of products made by the craftsmen with the tools given to the committee by the project and failed to pay the craftsmen properly. The project leadership focused its activities on three issues: (i) assisting the committee and the craftsmen to calculate the cost and the selling price of the articles manufactured; (ii) proposing ways of reaching a specific agreement between the craftsmen and the committee; and (iii) instituting a raw material and maintenance supply network for the replacement of working tools.

It may be noted that all these problems proved how difficult it was for a community to manage facilities and constituted a necessary stage in taking charge of their own affairs. In this area, the project could have chosen to allow some of the craftsmen to set up their own business.

Finally, after the conflicts had been resolved, the project activities continued and several young people from farmers' groups in the vicinity requested and secured positions as apprentices in the workshop.

With regard to health, some attempts were made to sink wells as a way of solving water supply problems which the people considered as a priority because their women and young girls had to cover long distances every day to fetch water. According to the health and sanitation survey, this was hard work which used up a considerable amount of time and reduced substantially the possibilities of improving living standards by the construction of drinking water supply points. Prior meetings were held with the people to explain the need for tests and to seek their approval for deciding on the sites to be chosen.

After conclusive experiments, the team proposed that traditional tiled wells should be sunk and protected with concrete masonry. They were to be worked with sturdy manual apparatus for pumping out the water. In the distribution of tasks, the farmers were to dig out a hole having a diameter of 1,50 metres and to prepare the baked-earth bricks. The project team would supervise the installation of the tiles and pumps together with the pipes supplied by the project. At this level, there were difficulties for the people to take charge of this activity because the women had not been adequately involved in the planning. The wells were also not evenly distributed among the hamlets because of short-comings in the survey conducted during the initial phase of the project. The people required the presence of the project leaders during that phase of implementation. With regard to health, it was difficult to decide which activities should be pursued. However, on account of the national policy, the prospects of the project and the capabilities of the community, two courses of actions were followed. The establishment of the proposed health post was entrusted by the project and the village committee to OXFAM, an international NGO operating in the province.

The villagers did not accept the idea of building a latrine from traditional materials which would avoid direct pollution because some of the models included the use of waste matter as compost.

From the analysis conducted, the project approach provided the existing development structures with a method of analysing and identifying the needs genuinely felt by the people.

As for the meeting of other needs identified by the people, specific mention should be made of the hygienic way of recovering rain water from the roofs of individual houses and filtering it with natural elements like charcoal and sand. Food was to be protected from disease vectors by the building of food boxes with mosquito netting. Kitchen waste and used household water was to be processed by burial and composting for the existing backyard gardens. The project team had prepared manuals on how things could be done simply and was responsible for advising families that decided to undertake one or other of these activities.

Finally, the project focused its efforts on experimentation with appropriate agricultural technology. Certain families had been given tools during the survey and had witnessed the training sessions and demonstrations conducted in this regard. After one year, the craftsmen who had participated in making those tools were looked upon with pride. Effective use was being made of such implements as the pedal-operated winnower, the groundnut decorticator while others like the pedal operated cassava mill, planter and wheeled cart were abandoned. In spite of two problems with the cassava mills, namely the refusal of the women to sit on them to pedal and some consumers complaining that the flour obtained did not have a fine enough texture, some families found these tools convenient and developed a business in hiring them out to other farmers forgetting that they were to be used as community property. With regard to securing improved seeds and fertilizers, the project team worked with the village committee officials to facilitate contacts with the French market gardening project at Mbanza-Ngungu and the Institut national d'études et de recherches agronomiques (INERA).

3.2.1.2. Experience in the Bandundu Province

Using the experience of the Mwala village project in Lower Zaire as a basis, the project team focused its efforts on a scheme with the two village communities of Misimbi and Kikamba on the Kinshasa-Kikwit road located about 500 km from the capital of Zaire.

Health was accorded top priority by the two villages and the project took the form of supplying drinking water to the village and building a clinic well-equipped with medicines to be used in midwifery. The intermediate lower cost solution was to diminish the distance to be covered in fetching water by installing some submerged water pumps and avoiding the most difficult road of access which led over a ravine to the springs. This advantage of this improvement was that the costs of installing the pump and the water catchment were within the reach of the communities and both the materials and equipment used were made in Zaire. The clinic buildings were designed by BEAU after consultation with experts of the Ministry of Health, WHO and OXFAM which had committed itself to the implementation and operation of the project. Three objectives that were to be attained in the building of the clinic were to improve village techniques and the use of local building materials, to secure the participation of the people in the construction work involving mostly the masons, joiners and carpenters; and to demonstrate the design of a building adapted to the physical conditions of the environment in terms of daylight, rain, wind, ventilation and insect control. Under the leadership of the village committee, the villagers contributed to the purchase and transportation over a distance of about 5 km of 1,000 bricks. The youth who had been organized for self-help activities of assistance to old and sick persons prepared and maintained a garden near the clinic for daily needs and the growing of known medicinal plants.

In this province, the project team used the methodical approach making sure that the implementation of the project constantly addressed local daily realities.

3.2.1.3. Summary of the experience of popular participation in the choice of projects implemented in the Lower Zaire and Bandundu provinces

One of the strategies pursued by the project team in the two provinces was to hold consults with the local people through which their environment was analysed and their priorities identified. Such analyses made it possible to identify the following priorities: agricultural implements, village crafts, water supply, environmental health and sanitation, product manufacture and marketing.

Following the analysis, the project team prepared alternative proposals with a view to discussing with the people about the content of the schemes on which the contract should be concluded. In the discussions, tasks were assigned specifically to farmers and project team members alike. The proposals were presented with the aid of plan documents, scale models, assignment sheets and cost estimates and preparations were made to conduct the leadership training exercise in such a way as would secure maximum participation from the people.

While the aforementioned priorities were set by the two communities in Lower-Zaire and in Bandundu, the selection of activities to be conducted took a different form. The discussions were held in the villages. The teaching materials such as scale models and cost estimates prepared by the project team were used to explain in detail the implications of each particular choice of operation approved, in terms of the social cost involved for the villagers (community labour, specialized and financial inputs) and a phased scenario based on the established time-frame. Before presenting other solutions contrary to what the people wanted, the project team leader had to explain the implications of these options. For example, with regard to contracts for hiring tractors to clear and to till the plots of farmers, the principle was that the farmers should sign the contracts and commit themselves to paying for the lease of the tractors.

In Lower-Zaire for example, the villagers participated in project activities by choosing the craftsmen and young people to be trained and building the community workshop together after holding detailed discussions on the time needed and the assignment of tasks. The same was done with organizing the management of the workshop in accordance with the wishes of the village committee.

Another strategy developed in the field to guarantee the effective participation of the people was to sign a contract with the village committee specifying who would do what, how and with what human or material resources. After meeting with the experts, the farmers decided to hold discussions among themselves in order to reach agreement on the activities to be carried out. In order to avoid any possible friction, the activities were further discussed between the villagers and the project team.

3.2.2. Experience in the Kivu Province

In this section, the experience coming out of a multi-sectoral programme chosen by the people and carried out with the assistance of the EEC will be presented. The Kivu programme is, first of all, a state of mind as its promoters like to put it. It is a new development approach, a mini-revolution both in substance, objectives and the way it was implemented. The initiators of the project first visited every part of the province, meeting with all socio-economic transactors, chief among whom were the farmers themselves. Only after having listened to them, talked with them and compiled an inventory of the genuine needs of the people was the Kivu programme put into operation. It began on a small scale through a host of micro-village schemes initiated by local development committees. This modest beginning was, however, crucial for achieving self-sustaining development or development with local roots. In a catalytic drive, this approach made it possible to elicit the enthusiasm and commitment of the people for all the sectoral subprogrammes conducted in the growing of coffee, rice, wheat and other crops.

The soils in Kivu Province are rich and the large population works hard. Moreover, co-operative traditions are well established and community-organized labour is considered normal. With the deterioration of infrastructure and particularly with the substantial increase in population growth, the fragile balance between land and man has been placed in jeopardy. This is why some of the programme objectives were aimed at helping to achieve food self-sufficiency, improving communications and providing electric power and drinking water supply through a substantial mobilization of the people concerned.

In 1987, a cholera epidemic showed the inhabitants of Kavumu locality in the Kabare zone that they were lacking in hygiene. There was no maternity home, clinic or drinkable water. A health committee was set up and the women within it constituted a subcommittee which got down to business by carrying out community work the "Salongo" way and laying the ground work for community water supply. However, they needed planning and organization.

The Association for the Integrated Development of the Kivu Province (ADI-Kivu) is a local NGO which is dynamic and deeply rooted. It supported the initiative of the women and secured the financing of the pre-feasibility study from the Kivu programme. Finally, the water supply scheme was carried out by the people with the assistance of European NGOs while the maternity home and clinic were built with the financial support of the Kivu programme and the EEC. The work was carried out by "Salongo" teams: men dug the foundations, women and young people went to fetch stones from the hills, the elderly fetched water and prepared sorghum for the volunteer workers. Traders even lent their trucks for carrying building materials to the site. The women's sub-committee collected contributions from 30,000 inhabitants of the area. This modest contribution of 50 Zaires per adult was important because the Kivu programme made it a point to insist that the people should help themselves if the programme was to help them and should contribute one third of the project inputs through voluntary labour and dues.

In this approach, the people participate largely because of the presence and commitment of ADI-Kivu. In each of the village micro-schemes, the EEC secured a local partner: an NGO, a village committee, a religious mission, a producer co-operative, a laymen's association or a business leader known for his commitment, local development activities and enjoying the confidence of the people. These partners were indispensable for the Kivu programme to undertake 56 micro-schemes in 1988 at a cost of ECU 2.2 million. The other compulsory condition was for the people to contribute one third of the total cost of the project which could in no case exceed ECU 100,000 (the cost of the Burhale water-supply scheme).

Micro-schemes are an interesting approach because of the new dynamism they generate. From north to south of the mountainous Kivu Province, neighbourhood and village committees find their resolve and work speedily taking shape in specific achievements which make a daily useful impact on their lives. Little by little, a state of mind based on co-operation and complementarity has unleashed a genuine development process.

To be more effective, the EEC-Kivu programme placed the emphasis on the direct participation of the people working with NGOs that operate in the field and took care not to neglect the role of national and local authorities. The Government of Zaire has a responsibility towards the Kivu programme because its role is to support private initiatives. In order for the initiatives taken within the context of the Kivu programme

to contribute to overall development and to make future sense, an inter-departmental follow-up committee (CIS) has been established. That committee is made up of representatives from the five ministerial departments directly concerned by the Kivu programme, namely: the ministries of planning, finance, agriculture, rural development, environment and conservation. The committee directs, co-ordinates, controls and evaluates all activities undertaken under the Kivu programme. It decides on the allocation of funds proposed by the Kivu programme project team and in some way acts as the conscience of the people.

The Kivu programme has been a successful experiment because the socio-cultural environment was conducive to the development activities undertaken. Popular awareness has also been of significant importance.

It should be noted that the Kivu programme was an idea to render assistance to the people in carrying out projects they had themselves defined. The principle was that nothing could be done without asking the people or finding out their priorities.

The problems encountered in the field have been:

(a) The insufficiency of the contribution, particularly financial, of the people because of their low income (however, the Kivu programme was obliged to reconsider the principle of one third local input previously stipulated);

(b) The insufficient mobilization of the people despite all the assurances secured by the social interface with village committees;

(c) The lack of proper technical interface causing delays in the implementation of many projects formulated by the people;

(d) Frustration of the local government authorities who felt that the Kivu programme was doing things which local government should have done. To resolve this problem, the local government officials were involved because they maintained that they should assume the responsibility even though they could not guarantee proper management of the projects;

(e) The misunderstanding which led to some NGOs wanting at all cost to control certain projects for which they provided technical backstopping.

On the whole, the approach pursued by the Kivu programme has been very effective and relevant because it has achieved good results and secured the commitment of the people.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that with all the speeches and statements made about popular participation and development, their translation into action still seems to pose serious problems considering how little has been done and the wide gap between what is said and what is done.

Indeed, the primary to be accorded to local development initiatives should be acknowledged if self-sustaining development is to be achieved. Popular participation means the effective and complete involvement of the people in all decision-making that

relates to the planning and organization of their community. The people are therefore one of the indispensable resources for national development in general and local development in particular.

Obviously, the promotion of development activities by awakening the conscience and catalyzing activities and initiatives of grass-roots people requires much restraint if the target group is not to feel imposed upon and thereby prevented from participating effectively. Since popular participation in development is a process whereby the mentality of the group is slowly converted into an awareness of its destiny, the exercise also requires patience in analysing problems and in thinking decisions through before moving into action. In Zaire, such a wait-and-see attitude was found prevalent in the Lower-Zaire province and can be considered as a mentality of assisted people. It is very different from what was encountered in Bandundu. This may be explained historically by the fact that in Bandundu the colonial presence was very little felt (only the religious missions and Lever Plantation Company in Zaire) while, in contrast, the Lower Zaire was heavily invested in by the colonialists and the attitude of local government and technical officers left no room for local initiatives to flourish. Later, some subsidized projects were introduced but the empty promises of politicians went to reinforce that mentality.

Considering some of the successes and failures of projects carried out in the aforementioned provinces of Zaire, the following lessons and observations should be noted:

(a) Some villages in Zaire are completely changing because of the tension between the traditional and the modern;

(b) Rural or local development projects must take into account existing village structures, socio-cultural values and the needs as defined by the beneficiaries;

(c) Dialogue between beneficiaries and foreign agencies is of capital importance;

(d) Genuine development is the result of the combined effort of villagers and foreign partners;

(e) The higher the degree of popular participation, the better the chances of rural development projects to succeed;

(f) Popular participation is the result of the awakenment of the people followed by an intentional effort to make their own way in ensuring their survival;

(g) A highly stratified society tends to hold back popular participation both with regard to decision-making and development action;

(h) At every stage of project development, all the active forces and social groups including the women and youth of the villages must be mobilized;

(i) Rural development activities should be monitored and controlled by the villagers who opted for them and have been rendered competent, responsible and self-reliant through training and information;

(g) The needed foreign assistance should be a growth supplement rather than a growth engine and its role should be clearly specified before the project begins.

Furthermore, it should be recognized that for effective popular participation in development, all the priorities should be set in the village by the villagers themselves, since the role of the State is to stimulate the setting of those priorities and not to confiscate them. In all the forms of participation, including the right to participate in education, research (environmental studies), health and project financing, the people should be involved in the planning. This is the stage which leads to all the other forms but if it is to be effective, it should be popularized through an intensive publicity campaign and cease to be the preserve of a few central and regional experts or planners. More such planning should be done at the local level with a view to achieving a more favourable impact from national economic and social development planning. It is at the local or grass-roots level that planning enables the people to become free in identifying and choosing their own projects without any imposition from the outside.

Finally, the role of the State and of international organizations is to stimulate or assist the institution of participation structures at the local level. The criterion in choosing development projects should be the degree of popular participation. National and international assistance should be geared to the aspirations of the local people concerned. Because of the temptation to conclude that the level of participation is based on the degree of training and the ability to comprehend of the people, this domestic obstacle could be reduced by educating and training the people without forgetting to provide them with adequate rural extension services designed to increase their participation in national development generally and community development in particular.